

Saul's son and Gideon's son

We saw earlier that, starting from the same point of extreme humility, Gideon and Saul traveled down different paths. Gideon was able to give up the power that he had received, while Saul loved the power more than he loved God. There is more here of interest if we pursue this story a little further and take a look at the chief sons of these two men.

We find from Judges 9 that Abimelech, Gideon's son, was consumed with power. He must have heard the people's request to his father that he and his descendants be king over them, and thought that his father had cheated him out of power. He wanted so badly to be king that he killed 70 of his brothers in an attempt to wipe out all possible family competition. He then set himself up as the king of Shechem. He was ultimately defeated.

On the other side of the coin we find Jonathan, the son of Saul, a man who does not particularly wish to be king, especially if there is another man more capable than he. David proved his worth by killing the giant Goliath, and we read in 1 Sam 18:1-4, "After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself." Jonathan bows before a man he feels is his superior, even though, as Saul points out in 1 Sam 20:30-31, David is Jonathan's competition to the power and glory and throne of Israel.

So we see a total turnaround from the fathers to the sons. I do not know why this is, but I do see it as very interesting. It serves to point out, though, the tremendous tendency that power has to corrupt people.

Now I think that it is important to consider the example given us of the perfect use of power, that of God's son Jesus Christ. Here was God in man, in whom resided the power of creation of the world and the power over death. We read from Phillipians 2:5-11, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." We see here that Christ did not think this power to be so important that he could lay part of it aside, and humble himself to become a man like one of us. He gave up his authority for a time, but God says that this will be rewarded at the end of time. Then he will have authority and power over all. His attitude, then, is that power is not as important as love and obedience. The treatment of the woman taken in adultery shows the true gentleness of his soul, even though he has all power. He has his ambition and his power under complete control. With this characteristic gentleness he will deal with us when the time comes.